Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 CAIRO 16991 131756Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 OMB-01 SSM-03 EUR-12
ARA-10 /105 W
----------103675 141316Z /45
R 131432Z OCT 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 423
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 16991

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, EG
SUBJECT: CABINET RESHUFFLE MOOTED

REF: A. CAIRO 15907, B. :-849 16184

1. THIRD EDITION OF OCTOBER 13 AHRAM YANKED LEAD STORY ON FONMIN FAHMY'S RETURN (SEPTEL, SUBSTITUTING BANNER HEADLINED, UNSOURCED REPORT THAT CABINET RESHUFFLE IMMINENT. ACCORDING AHRAM, PM SALEM WILL BEGIN CONSULTATIONS WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS TO DETERMINE WHICH MINISTERS ARE TO BE REPLACED. PAPER ALSO CLAIMS SALEM WILL MAKE SIMULTANEOUS CHANGES IN UNSPECIFIED NUMBER OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS.

2. WRITING ON INSIDE PAGE SAME PAPER, RAID ATTAR CLAIMS RESHUFFLE DESIGNED CREATE CABINET BETTER ABLE ADDRESS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, RECONSTRUCTION OF "LIBERATED TERRITORIES", ESTAB-
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 CAIRO 16991 131756Z

LISHMENT OF MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY,AND IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WITH USSR, LIBYA AND (IMPLICITLY) CUBA. AT SAME TIME, ATTAR SAYS NEW CABINET WILL BE EXPECTED DEEPEN EGYPT'S TIES WITH WEST THROUGH INCREASED INVESTMENT WHICH, INTER ALIA, WILL MAKE COUNTRY BETTER ABLE CONFRONT "ZIONISM AND EXPANSIONIST IDEOLOGIES". NEW CABINET ALSO WILL BE EXPECTED TO HOLD DOWN INTERCOMMUNAL FRICTION WHILE RAISING SOCIETY'S RELIGIOUS VALUES.

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3. COMMENT: ATTAR IS ERRATIC CORRESPONDENT RECENTLY ELEVATED TO DEPUTY EDITOR, REPORTEDLY AS RESULT SADAT'S PERSAL INTERVENTION. EMBASSY CONTACTS AT AHRAM (WHILE DEPLORING CONTENT SOME OF HIS RECENT COLUMNS) MAINTAIN HE HAS READY ACCESS TO UPPER LEVELS OF EGYPTIAN REGIME. WE DO NOT THINK HE WOULD HAVE WRITTEN COLUMN, NOR WOULD AHRAM HAVE SPLASHED COMPANION PIECE ON FRONT PAGE, UNLESS THERE SOME SUBSTANCE TO SPATE OF RECENT RUMORS CONCERNING IMPENDING CABINET CHANGES. THIS PARTICULARLY TRUE IN VIEW OFFICIALLY SOURCED RECENT DENIAL THAT ANY SUCH MOVE BEING CONTEMPLATED (REF A).

4. IN THIS CONNECTION, IT WORTH NOTING THAT SADAT HABITUALLY HAS TENDED SHUFFLED CABINET MINISTERS WHENEVER CONFRONTED BY SIGNIFICANT EXTERNAL CHALLENGES. ADDITIONALLY, SADAT CLEARLY INDICATED IN SEPT 28 SPEECH (REF B) DISSATISFACTION WITH CABINET'S PERFORMANCE. NUMBER OF EMBASSY CONTACTS HAVE CONFIRMED THIS DISSATISFACTION AND PREDICT RESHUFFLE. MOST EXPECT CHANGES TO BE COSMETIC, HOWEVER, AND DO NOT ANTICIPATE THAT IT WILL INVOLVE MAJOR POLITICAL FIGURES.

5. IN CURRENT SITUATION, HOWEVER, CAIRO RUMOR MILL WORKING OVERTIME AND VIRTUALLY ALL MINISTERS LISTED AS POTENTIAL CANDIDATES FOR AX. MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND CULTURE AL-SAWI HAS BEEN ON MOST LISTS, WITH MURSI SA'AD AL DIN TAGGED (IN LARGE PART BY HIMSELF) AS LIKELY SUCCESSOR. (MURSI MODESTLY
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PAGE 03 CAIRO 16991 131756Z

DENIES ANY INTEREST IN THIS POSITION.) MINPLANNING ABD AL-MAGUID HAS MADE NO SECRET OF HIS DESIRE SHED MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES. ADDITIONAL SPECULATION ON POSSIBLE REMOVAL MINTRADE/SUPPLY, MININDUSTRY, MINMANPOWER AND MINSTATE FOR AGRICULTURE (WHO REPORTEDLY HAS ALREADY RESIGNED).

6. SALEM AND FAHMY HAVE NOT BEEN EXCLUDED FROM SPECULATION ALTHOUGH WE THINK IT UNLIKELY THEY WILL GO, AT LEAST AT THIS TIME. AHRAM ARTICLE NOTED ABOVE INDICATES PM WILL CONTINUE HEAD RESHUFFLED CABINET, AND IT WOULD BE UNSEEMLY FOR PRESIDENT TO SACK SALEM SO RECENTLY AFTER TASKING HIM WITH PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR CARRYING OUT NEW ECONOMIC POLICIES (REF B). ATTAR'S SUGGESTION THAT ONE OF GOALS FOR REVAMPED CABINET WILL BE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH USSR AND LIBYA, WOULD INDICATE FAHMY POSITION STRENGTHENED; HE HAS LONG ADVOCATED CLOSER TIES WITH MOSCOW. IN ANY CASE, WE WOULDNOT EXPECT SADAT TO REMOVE KEY FIGURE IN PEACE PROCESS WHILE CURRENT ROUND STILL UNDERWAY.
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EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
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